

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 15, 2021

Tom Vilsack
Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20250

Secretary Vilsack:

As an Iowan, you know firsthand how important biofuels and sensible regulations are for our state's agriculture community. Farming is hard work in and of itself, and is made more challenging by the myriad of external forces that can make or break a farmer's or a rancher's year—with weather, commodity price fluctuations, and other factors outside their control all having an impact on whether an operation ends the year in the black or in the red.

Policy changes in Washington also have a major impact on the livelihoods of our farmers. A recent announcement by the Biden Administration regarding its planned rewrite of the definition of Waters of the United States (WOTUS), as well as rumors about administrative action to reduce or eliminate renewable fuel blending targets for petroleum refiners, make me question this administration's commitment to our agricultural producers. These changes would simultaneously make it more difficult for family farmers to produce their crops, while undercutting key markets.

On June 9, 2021, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) announced their intent to roll back the previous administration's Navigable Waters Protection Rule, and to expand the number of waterways that qualify as WOTUS, and thus fall under federal jurisdiction. This is unwelcome news to Iowa's farmers, ranchers, and small businesses, who value the certainty and clarity the Navigable Waters Protection Rule has provided.

For years, the Obama Administration's 2015 WOTUS rule created uncertainty, fear, and confusion, with farmers left to wonder whether a tire track that collected rainwater could potentially be subject to federal regulation. The Navigable Waters Protection Rule put these concerns to rest by establishing clear and reasonable definitions of what qualifies as a "water of the United States." The Biden Administration now plans to reverse this progress by undoing a rule that enjoys broad support from the agriculture community and many other important stakeholders.

While campaigning in Iowa and elsewhere, then-candidate Biden decried the Trump EPA's undercutting of the Renewable Fuel Standard (RFS), yet now reportedly the White House is directing the EPA to find ways to reduce blending obligations for petroleum refiners to the direct detriment of ethanol and biodiesel producers across the Midwest. Any reduction in the use of

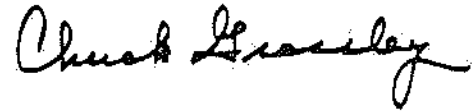
clean renewable fuels would be replaced gallon for gallon by fossil fuels, and our farmers and biofuels producers would bear the brunt of this action.

We respectfully ask that you make known to the President and your colleagues at the EPA and the Corps the serious concerns Iowa's farmers and ranchers have with the Biden Administration's recent actions on WOTUS and biofuels. We are fortunate to have a fellow Iowan at the helm of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and are counting on you to advocate for Iowa and the interests of the state's agriculture industry.

Sincerely,



Joni K. Ernst
United States Senator



Charles E. Grassley
United States Senator